Using Blogging to Tell Your Organization's Story

The [YALI Network blog](#) is a platform that enables us to share powerful stories of YALI Network members and to provide expert advice on subjects YALI Network members care about. You, too, can use blogging to share your stories and engage your audience.

Blogs are excellent Web-based platforms to host and maintain records of creative content and stories. Your blogging platform can host text, images and embedded videos, and provide a landing page that can be linked to various sources of traditional and social media channels/platforms.

There are multiple platforms available for blogging, including [WordPress](#), [Joomla](#), [Django](#) and [Drupal](#), among others. These platforms are versatile and allow you to create blogs that can expand reach and resources by connecting with audiences emotionally.

The most effective way to share stories on your blog is to plan ahead and create a detailed editorial calendar for producing original content. Most blogging platforms have built-in capabilities to schedule and publish posts according to your organization's editorial calendar.

You can increase the visibility of your blog by being active and consistent, by sharing your blog posts through social media and email, by inviting experts in your field to contribute as guest bloggers, and by talking about stories that tie into current events.

This article is adapted from Hatch for Good's [Guide to Blogging and CMS](#). Hatch for Good is a platform that provides people and organizations with the tools they need to create powerful stories and inspire positive action in the digital age. Visit [Hatch for Good's website](#) to view additional resources.

Using Twitter to Tell Your Organization's Story

Every month, thousands of YALI Network members engage policymakers, experts and entrepreneurs during exclusive #YALIChats on [Twitter](#). But that isn't all that Twitter can do for you.

Twitter is an online social networking and microblogging tool to send and read short, 140-character text messages, called "tweets." Users access Twitter through its website interface, desktop application, SMS or mobile device application.

Twitter is often used for instantly spreading news and information. It can be compared to a news channel — you can discover news as it's happening, learn more about topics that are important to you and get the inside scoop in real time.

If you have something quick to say and have the capacity to say it often, Twitter could be your platform of choice. Twitter is also heavily used for live tweeting and live events.

The most effective way to share stories on Twitter is to plan ahead by building an editorial calendar and scheduling your tweets in advance with applications like [Hootsuite](#), [TweetDeck](#) or [Buffer](#). Plan to post at least three tweets per day. Short and simple text and photos work best.

You can maximize your visibility on Twitter by starting discussions with influential people, posing questions, following others and using relevant hashtags in your tweets.

This article is adapted from Hatch for Good's [Guide to Twitter](#). Hatch for Good is a platform that provides people and organizations with the tools they need to create powerful stories and inspire positive action in the digital age. Visit [Hatch for Good's website](#) to view additional resources.

[Using LinkedIn to Tell Your Organization's Story](#)

Did you know that nearly 5,000 YALI Network members use the [YALI Network LinkedIn Group](#) to connect with one another and to grow their professional networks?

LinkedIn is a business-oriented social network that helps its users make professional connections, find jobs, discover leads and more. Users create their own professional profiles — similar to a digital resume — and establish connections with colleagues, potential partners and businesses.

If you are looking to share stories with an educated, affluent and professional audience, consider using LinkedIn. Its ability to engage a highly targeted, donor-rich demographic makes it a powerful distribution channel for social impact organizations.

The best way to share stories on LinkedIn is through status updates on your organization's Company Page. When sharing content on LinkedIn, be sure to post links and use images. Posts with links to other content have twice the engagement rate of posts without, and posts with images have a 98 percent higher comment rate.

Organizations should engage with their LinkedIn followers on a regular basis by encouraging them to participate in the conversations spurred by the stories you share in your status updates. You can further this participation by asking follow-up questions and writing status updates with clear calls to action.

To increase your organization's visibility on LinkedIn, you should create original content, encourage others to share your content, and give people a clear reason to engage with your content.

This article is adapted from Hatch for Good's [Guide to LinkedIn](#). Hatch for Good is a platform that

provides people and organizations with the tools they need to create powerful stories and inspire positive action in the digital age. Visit Hatch for Good's website to view additional resources.

Journalist Brings Positive Change to Nigerian Communities

Oluwatoyosi (Toyosi) Ogunseye

For years, the steel plant in Lagos, Nigeria, emitted noxious fumes, annoying local residents. So journalist Oluwatoyosi (Toyosi) Ogunseye decided to investigate.

Ogunseye convinced her employer, Punch Nigeria Limited, to pay to test the health of a group of residents. The results of the residents' blood, urine and drinking water tests revealed poisonous metals in their bodies that were developing into cancers, asthma and other ailments.

Punch Nigeria publishes Punch, Nigeria's most widely read newspaper, and Ogunseye's investigation became a three-part series linking the plant's fumes to the residents' ailments.

Soon after Ogunseye's series appeared in Punch, the government ordered the plant closed and allowed it to reopen only under strict new regulations. The plant's owner agreed to compensate residents.

This wasn't the first time one of Ogunseye's investigations sparked positive change. When another story revealed a children's ward in a government-owned hospital was under-equipped, the government bought more incubators for high-risk infants and increased its support of other facilities that serve children."I like to reveal the story behind the story," she said.

Her experience shows that accurate and fair journalism can make a difference in peoples' lives.

"I went into journalism because of my passion to make positive changes in the society," said the 2014 Mandela Washington Fellow and YALI Network member.

Building a Career in Journalism

In her second year as a university biochemistry student, then-20-year-old Ogunseye landed her first reporting job with the Sun newspapers. One of her first investigative stories was about four students who suddenly died after attending a disco.

Since her first days with Sun, Ogunseye has earned a bachelor's and a master's degree in biochemistry from the University of Lagos, a bachelor's in media and communications from Pan-Atlantic University, and a Ph.D. in politics and international relations from the University of Leicester.

Now Punch's first female editor and its youngest, the 31-year-old has 11 years of experience as an investigative journalist writing about topics such as politics, crime, business, health and the environment. Ogunseye, who lives in Lagos, also teaches media ethics at the Nigerian Institute of Journalism.

An inspiration to the next generation of journalists, Ogunseye advises reporters to observe what their peers are doing well and not so well. "Ensure that your content is better than the competitor's while ensuring that their weakness is your strength."

She advises people who read newspapers, listen to radio or learn about current events online to "consume media responsibly. ... It will give you a balanced perspective of issues."

Ogunseye has received numerous professional awards, including the Knight International Journalism Award for outstanding news coverage that makes a difference in the lives of people around the world and the CNN MultiChoice African Journalist of the Year Award.

She hopes one day to be president of Nigeria. "I believe I understand the challenges of my country," she says.

Media Literacy: Five Core Concepts

They are on your mobile phones and computer screens, in newspapers and magazines, stretched across billboards and broadcast through radio waves. They are mediated messages, and you are inundated with them every day.

With so many viewpoints, it's hard to separate fact from fiction. To guide your exploration of the media that surround you, the Center for Media Literacy developed these five core concepts:

1. **All media messages are constructed.** Media texts are built just as surely as buildings and highways are built. The key behind this concept is figuring out who constructed the message, out of what materials and to what effect.

2. **Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.** Each form of communication has its own creative language: scary music heightens fear, camera close-ups convey intimacy, big headlines signal significance. Understanding the grammar, syntax and metaphor of media language helps us to be less susceptible to manipulation.

3. **Different people experience the same media message differently.** Audiences play a role in interpreting media messages because each audience member brings to the message a unique set of life experiences. Differences in age, gender, education and cultural upbringing will generate unique interpretations.

4. **Media have embedded values and points of view.** Because they are constructed, media messages carry a subtext of who and what is important — at least to the person or people creating the message. The choice of a character's age, gender or race, the selection of a setting, and the actions within the plot are just some of the ways that values become "embedded" in a television show, a movie or an advertisement.

5. **Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.** Much of the world's media were developed as money-making enterprises. Newspapers and magazines lay out their pages with ads first; the space remaining is devoted to news. Likewise, commercials are part and parcel of most television watching. Now, the Internet has become an international platform through which groups or individuals can attempt to persuade.

By considering the core concepts behind every media message, you equip yourself with an ability to analyze and interpret a message — and to accept or reject its legitimacy.

To learn more about these core concepts, download the Center for Media Literacy's [free toolkit](). The Center for Media Literacy is an organization that helps people make sense of today's complex media environment.

[Media Literacy: Five Key Questions]()

What separates a newspaper from a tabloid or a legitimate website from a hoax? Knowing how to distinguish [fact from fiction](). To encourage people to think more critically about the media they are consuming, the [Center for Media Literacy]() developed these five questions one should consider:

1. Who created this message?

2. What techniques are used to attract my attention?

3. How might people understand this message differently?

4. What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?

5. Why was this message sent?

By asking these questions regularly about the messages you see, read and hear, you can become more media literate, better formulate your own opinions and better express these opinions in public debates or discussions.

The Center for Media Literacy is an organization that teaches people how to make sense of our complex media environment. You can learn more about media literacy by downloading the organization's [free toolkit on media literacy education]().

[Can You Separate Fact from Fiction?](#)

As our media consumption increases, so does our need for media literacy. (Adam Jones/Flickr)

In 2014, South Africans spent 8.2 hours a day consuming media on the Internet. They weren't in the lead. According to [market-research](#) firm GlobalWebIndex, Filipinos won that distinction, by spending 9.6 hours a day accessing the Internet from their desktops, laptops and mobile devices.

That is a lot of time. And it underscores the need for people everywhere to be media literate.

What is media literacy?

Whether online, on television or in newspapers, people are bombarded with messages. Media literacy is about understanding how and why messages are being communicated. It starts with asking the right questions: Who created this message? What words or images are used in this message and why? How is this message supposed to make me feel?

Why is media literacy important?

Media literacy teaches you to think critically about the information you consume. These skills — asking relevant questions, exploring multiple viewpoints, making novel connections — aren't just important in the living room, or wherever else you might watch television or check a smartphone. Critical thinking helps you do well in many pursuits, whether in the classroom or the boardroom.

The [Center for Media Literacy](#) has identified five more reasons to understand today's media-soaked environment:

1. You need two skills to be engaged citizens of a democracy: critical thinking and self-expression. Media literacy instills both.
2. You are exposed to more media messages in one day than previous generations were exposed to in a year. Media literacy teaches you the skills to navigate safely through these messages.
3. Media exerts a significant impact on the way we understand, interpret and act. Media literacy helps you understand outside influences and empowers you to make better decisions.
4. The world is increasingly influenced by visual images. Learning how to "read" through layers of image-based communication is just as necessary as learning to analyze text-based communication.
5. Media literacy helps you understand where information comes from, whose interests may be being served and how to find alternative views.

How can I become media literate?

Examine what you read, watch and hear. By doing this often, you'll become more aware of its purpose and better able to separate fact from fiction. For in-depth resources about media literacy, visit the Center for Media Literacy's online reading room and the National Association for Media Literacy Education's resource hub.

Veteran Journalist Discusses Free Media in Latest #YALICHAT

"Journalists should be friends to facts and issues as opposed to personalities or politicians. What's important is accountability."

This is how Ugandan-born American journalist Shaka Ssali described the responsibility of journalists during a May 12 #YALIChat. The host of the popular program Straight Talk Africa responded to questions from YALI Network members as follow-up to his guest blog post.

The veteran journalist said he was drawn to journalism "because I wanted to advocate for social justice and give a voice to the voiceless." Journalism also gives him "the opportunity to put people in authority in a position where they are held accountable," he said.

Here are some other highlights from Ssali's #YALIChat:

> *I'm profoundly honored & exceedingly humbled to have the opportunity to interact with [@YALInetwork](#). [#YALICHAT](#) [pic.twitter.com/iWZ4TJcXj4](#)*
>
> — Straight Talk Africa (@VOAShaka) [May 12, 2015](#)

> *.[@ndzomoaurelien](#) [@YALINetwork](#) You have to do your homework, report news with neither fear, nor favor [#YALICHAT](#)*
>
> — Straight Talk Africa (@VOAShaka) [May 12, 2015](#)

> *.[@ladumdum](#) When Africa can overcome socio-political obstacles & practice journalism that reflects the realities of the Mother continent.*
>
> — Straight Talk Africa (@VOAShaka) [May 12, 2015](#)

> *.[@Sir_Ruffy](#) To be a good journalist you have to have the passion to be a servant to the truth,*

because it is a calling not an occupation.

— Straight Talk Africa (@VOAShaka) [May 12, 2015](#)

.[@dshekuza](#) [@YALINetwork](#) Citizen journalism plays an important role in [#Africa](#), even better in tandem with traditional journalism [#YALICHAT](#)

— Straight Talk Africa (@VOAShaka) [May 12, 2015](#)

.[@GenuineRamabote](#) [@VOANews](#) If the mistake belongs to the media institution, it should be acknowledged & corrected immediately [#YALICHAT](#)

— Straight Talk Africa (@VOAShaka) [May 12, 2015](#)

.[@tunde_aribisala](#) Where there is no free media internet journalism can be a catalyst. In other cases can play a complementary role [#YALICHAT](#)

— Straight Talk Africa (@VOAShaka) [May 12, 2015](#)

.[@kennedytetteh](#) The role of media in [#Africa](#) is to inform, educate, provoke, to expose social injustices & hold people in power accountable.

— Straight Talk Africa (@VOAShaka) [May 12, 2015](#)

.[@GenuineRamabote](#) [@YALINetwork](#) I do my job with neither favor, nor fear. [#YALICHAT](#)

— Straight Talk Africa (@VOAShaka) [May 12, 2015](#)

Time is not our best ally. Get better Africa and not bitter. Let's keep the African hope alive. [#YALICHAT](#) [pic.twitter.com/XsClN2ulEq](#)

— Straight Talk Africa (@VOAShaka) [May 12, 2015](#)

On that note, thank you all for following and asking your questions.

— Straight Talk Africa (@VOAShaka) [May 12, 2015](#)

The Many Benefits of Community-Based Conservation

Cattle bunching promotes healthier pastures and attracts grazing wildlife. (USAID/Riccardo Gangale)

In 1990, Namibia became the first African nation to incorporate environmental protections into its constitution.

Before Namibia's 1990 independence, tourism was controlled by a private minority group. Locals received little benefit from tourism, and few had incentives to conserve. Namibia's wildlife populations plummeted as poaching and droughts increased.

Then Namibia's government made another bold move. With the help of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), it shifted the rights and responsibilities of managing wildlife and land onto local communities.

Known as Living in a Finite Environment, or LIFE, this project brought together the Namibian government, USAID, the World Wildlife Fund and several local partners. Together, they provided conservancies with technical support, training, grants and regional coordination.

To become a conservancy, communities had to define their borders and membership, establish a governing committee, develop a benefit distribution plan and adopt a legal constitution. In return, they earned the rights to hunt animals for their own use, manage protected game and permit trophy hunting within a quota.

Today, nearly one in four rural Namibians belongs to a registered conservancy. Wildlife is a valued asset. Poaching is no longer acceptable, and many native species have thrived.

LIFE has become a model. In 2004, USAID helped launched a similar project in Kenya called the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT), an organization that includes pastoralists, landowners and the Kenyan government. Both projects illustrate the benefits of community-based conservation.

Thriving wildlife

Conservancy members know the more wildlife they have, the more tourists they can attract. Elephant sightings in Kenya's Sera Conservancy, for example, increased 366 percent after NRT's establishment.

What's more, less than a third of elephant deaths on NRT's conservancy lands are caused by poaching — a stark contrast to the 87 percent caused by poaching outside the conservancies. That's partly because poaching is seen as taking away from the community, and locals are more likely to report poachers.

Healthier lands

Many conservancies have instituted new land management practices. One such practice, cattle bunching, lumps herds of cattle in one place for grazing instead of allowing them to spread out. This

helps break up the hard soil while giving the unused land time to heal. Once the cattle have eaten through one patch, herders move them onto another, allowing the first patch time to recover.

These improved grazing practices have resulted in fatter cattle and higher incomes. By 2012, conservancy pastoralists had sold $1.17 million of cattle.

More jobs

Conservancies can partner with private companies to open safari lodges, sell trophy hunting licenses to professional hunters and make handicrafts such as jewelry.

In Namibia, LIFE has created 547 full-time and 3,250 part-time jobs. In Kenya, women from NRT conservancies sold $85,000 worth of jewelry in 2011 alone. In fact, NRT conservancies earn more than $1 million every year from tourism, livestock and jewelry.

Greater development

Any money the conservancies make is shared among the members. Many conservancies use this money to compensate pastoralists who've lost livestock, to subsidize education for its members and to start new projects like growing cash crops.

In most conservancies, about 60 percent of gross income is put toward development projects such as increasing access to water or improving road infrastructure.

Better governance

For USAID, the process matters as much as the product. It's not just about conserving wildlife or creating jobs. By encouraging inclusive decisionmaking, LIFE and NRT are cultivating good governance.

Through community-based conservancies, locals are learning how to hold their representatives accountable — and how to replace them when necessary. Meanwhile, representatives are learning how to manage resources and funds on behalf of their members.

To Develop Ecotourism, Protect Wildlife

Faye Ndiaga explores Senegal's ecosystems by canoe. (Courtesy of Faye Ndiaga)

From his canoe, Faye Ndiaga surveys the mammals, birds, reptiles and flora living along Senegal's

mangrove-dotted river banks. He wants to ensure the fragile ecosystem is around for future generations to enjoy.

"I don't want to wait for an animal species to be endangered to bring protection," he says. "Some animal species like the rhinoceros are endangered and the struggle to protect them is hard because we did not try to do that earlier," says the 29-year-old YALI Network member who hopes to work in Senegal's tourism industry or with a nonprofit devoted to wildlife and environmental protection.

Senegal stretches from the semiarid Sahel savanna in the north to tropical forest with in the south. It spans wooded hills in the southeast to mangrove-lined estuaries on the Atlantic. The country's wildlife includes terns, lions, elephants, giraffes, hippopotamus, manatees, turtles and gazelles. It hosts a variety of coastal birds and wetland and grassland waterfowl. Reptiles range from snakes, lizards and crocodile species.

A lowland waterway in Senegal. (@ AP Images)

Ndiaga thinks his nation is ideal for a diverse industry devoted to hosting guests that appreciate its cultural and environmental resources. Already a tourist destination for many Europeans, Senegal has the potential to attract even more visitors from the United States and Asia and to create "green" jobs, he believes.

> *"My goal is to polish the image of Senegal," Ndiaga says, adding that "if we want to develop ecotourism, we must protect the wildlife."*

Faye Ndiaga, right, and a friend examine a beached sea turtle. (Courtesy of Faye Ndiaga)

The environmentalist says that by raising public awareness of the need to protect endangered species, Senegal can avoid harmful practices like the unnecessary hunting of migratory birds. He stresses that protecting natural resources is the responsibility of all nations. "Protect animals before they are endangered," Ndiaga implores.

Ndiaga's dream for a responsibly-developed ecotourism industry in Senegal has support. He notes that Senegal's government acts to protect the environment in several ways. It "encourages its citizens to work more to protect the environment," protects its parks and wildlife reserves through a national forest agency, and provides safe refuge to endangered species imported from other countries, he says.